



VAWA: FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

What is happening with VAWA reauthorization?

A strong, bipartisan reauthorization of the Violence Against Women Act (S.1925) passed the Senate on 4/26/12 by a vote of 68 to 31 (2/3 of the Senate supported the proposals recommended by the field). Your calls and support made that possible! On May 16, a House bill (H.R. 4970) narrowly passed by a vote of 222 to 205. H.R. 4970 is an unsupported version of reauthorization that left out all the protections for LGBTQ and Native American women victims of violence, significantly rolled back protections for battered and abused immigrants, and imposed wasteful government growing measures. Although key differences are significant, the two bills have many of the same important provisions. Now, Congress must prioritize moving forward on VAWA, using a victim-centered lens to develop a bill that will pass both chambers and be sent to the President.

How does calling my Congressperson help pass VAWA?

Calling your Representatives and Senators lets them know that passing VAWA matters to the people who elected them! It shows them we care and are not going to stop calling until they pass a VAWA bill that safely and effectively protects all victims of domestic violence and sexual assault.

Why do we need to reauthorize VAWA now?

Justice and safety for Native American Women: Native American victims of domestic violence often cannot seek justice because their courts are not allowed to prosecute non-Native offenders--even for crimes committed on Tribal land. This major gap in justice, safety, and violence prevention must be addressed. The Senate version identifies a solution for this that would give tribal courts the authority they need to hold offenders in their communities accountable.

Justice and Safety for LGBT survivors: Lesbian, Gay, Transgender, and Bisexual survivors of violence sometimes face discrimination when seeking help and protection. The Senate version of VAWA prohibits this discrimination because all victims of violence should have access to the same services and protection to overcome trauma and find safety. They shouldn't wait any longer to be granted that protection.

Safe Housing for Survivors: Landmark VAWA housing protections that were passed in 2005 have helped prevent discrimination against and unjust evictions of survivors of domestic violence in public and assisted housing. The law, however, did not cover all federally subsidized housing programs. In VAWA 2011, there is an opportunity to expand these protections to all federally subsidized housing, explicitly protect victims of sexual assault and address the pressing need for emergency housing transfers.

Maintaining VAWA grant programs: VAWA grants are effectively meeting the needs of millions of victims across the country. Many important improvements have been recommended to the grant programs, including allowing state domestic violence coalitions to be the lead applicant on Grants to Encourage Arrest program, ensuring that specific stakeholders, including domestic violence coalitions, play a meaningful role in developing state STOP plans, and providing a formal process for OVW to receive coalition and other key domestic violence and sexual assault community input. While it is likely that the VAWA grant programs will continue to be funded, the reauthorization of VAWA ensures on-going funding for grant programs through the annual federal appropriations process.

Without VAWA's passage, these important improvements will be lost. Passing a strong, bipartisan VAWA immediately means that survivors do not have to wait for safety or for justice.